

what they did or what they sacrificed. To us, they were our greatest generation. They left the comforts of their family and their communities to confront evil from Iwo Jima to Bastogne. Together, they won the war in the Pacific by defeating an empire and liberated a continent by destroying Hitler and the Nazis.

To them they were simply doing their jobs. They enlisted in unprecedented numbers to defend our freedoms and our values. They represented the very best of us and made us proud.

From a young age I remember playing the bugle at the memorial services of veterans of the first two World Wars. It instilled in me a profound sense of respect that I will never forget.

Honoring the service of every generation of American veterans is a Montana value. I deeply appreciate the work of the Big Sky Honor Flight, the nonprofit organization that made this trip possible.

I say to the World War II veterans making the trip, I salute you. We will always be grateful, and we will never forget your service or your sacrifice.

RECOGNIZING STEPPING STONES CENTER

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the 50th anniversary of Stepping Stones Center, which serves the needs of people with disabilities in Greater Cincinnati and inspires independence and pathways to helping people achieve their potential. I have visited Stepping Stones on several occasions and have always been impressed by their work.

Stepping Stones Center was founded in 1963 when a handful of parents and friends of children with disabilities established Cincinnati's first day camp for children with disabilities. These passionate and loving parents wanted their children to have opportunities like those of their siblings, friends and neighbors.

Over the years, Stepping Stones has continued to expand, broadening the scope of services and the ability to reach more families. In the early years, Stepping Stones' services focused on traditional day camp opportunities, which were enhanced to provide therapeutic benefits including outdoor activities, arts and crafts, swimming and games.

In 1971, the region's first on-site infant stimulation program was developed and Stepping Stones helped launch Cincinnati Mothers of Special Children in 1974.

Partnering with the Rotary Club of Cincinnati, programming for a second campus was developed for Camp Allyn in Batavia, augmenting summer programs with year-round educational programs, overnight camps and initiating services for adults.

In response to the growing needs of children with autism, Stepping Stones launched its innovative Step-Up program as Greater Cincinnati's first al-

ternative education program for students with severe autism and extreme behaviors in 2004. Today, Step-Up serves students from 14 school districts in the region. In 2013, Stepping Stones launched the region's first sensory needs respite and support program for children with autism and other sensory needs and extreme behaviors, filling a critical need for ongoing overnight recreational respites.

Since its founding, thousands of high school students in Greater Cincinnati have been trained and have served as volunteer camp counselors, learning the benefits of giving back to their communities and gaining an understanding of occupations that serve those with special needs. Many special education teachers, therapists and disabilities professionals in Greater Cincinnati can trace their vocations to summers volunteering at Stepping Stones.

On this occasion I would like to recognize Stepping Stones Center and honor the founders, Margaret—Peggy—Geier, Minor LeBlond and Mary T. Schloss, the trailblazers who identified a need, envisioned a solution, and then worked tirelessly to make Stepping Stones happen. I salute the volunteers, staff members, donors and parents who carry on their spirit every day, continuing to build pathways to independence for people with disabilities. It is a privilege to recognize this 50 year anniversary, and I wish Stepping Stones all the best for the future.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT TRISTAN MYKAL WADE

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, today I rise to recognize and honor the extraordinary service and ultimate sacrifice of SGT Tristan Mykal Wade, of Indianapolis, IN. Sergeant Wade was serving in the U.S. Army, assigned to the 573rd Clearance Company at White Sands Missile Range in Afghanistan. He was serving a 9-month deployment and his unit was scheduled to return to White Sands in April.

On Friday, March 22, while serving in Qarah Bagh District, Ghazni Province, Afghanistan, enemy forces attacked Sergeant Wade's unit with an improvised explosive device and he was killed. Command Sgt. Major Joe Medlin of Rock Hill, the ranking enlisted man for the task force, stated Sergeant Wade was:

An outstanding soldier and a true hero. He will certainly be missed by his unit and all of us in Task Force Prowler.

White Sands Missile Range Commander BG Gen. Gwen Bingham said:

We thank him for his outstanding service and sacrifice. We will never forget him. Our brave men and women perform a multitude of missions in a magnanimous way in Afghanistan and all places around the globe. They do so selflessly without any expectation of anything in return.

Certainly, Sergeant Wade is a shining example of this selflessness and patriotism.

An Indianapolis native, Sergeant Wade attended three different high schools while a freshman. He enrolled at Southport High School at the beginning of his sophomore year and joined the football program, which had endured a 10-year plus stretch of losing seasons. Head football coach Bill Peebles remembered Tristan as a cocky young kid who wanted to catch touchdown passes and become a Friday-night star. Although Coach Peebles didn't expect much from Wade, Tristan represented the epitome of the program's goal—excelling in the classroom, in training and on the field. Over the following 3 years, Coach Peebles watched Tristan grow into a leader who helped turn the football program into a winning program. "He went from wanting to be a Friday-night hero as a skinny sophomore, to being a Friday-night hero," Peebles said. Sergeant Wade graduated from Southport High School in 2009.

He carried into the Army his enthusiasm for sports where he was a member of the Army volleyball team. Friends and family remember how he enjoyed practical jokes and dancing. But most important to Sergeant Wade was his precious daughter Skylynn of whom he wrote, "She is my world and I'll truly miss her while in Afghanistan."

While still in high school, Tristan volunteered for the U.S. Army, following in the footsteps of his father SGT Daniel L. Wade who had been to Afghanistan in 2004, and his uncles. He knew he would likely be deployed to active combat zones, but as he was known to do all his life, he demonstrated courage and conviction. "No matter how scared he was, he never showed it," his mother Tisa Wade said.

Sergeant Wade was respected and appreciated by his fellow soldiers for his professionalism as well as his personal qualities. As LTC Andre Balyoz pointed out in his eulogy, Sergeant Wade was:

A natural leader, the type who took charge and made things happen. He always took care of and protected his Soldiers.

And although the gravity of his mission was always with him, Lieutenant Colonel Balyoz said that:

Tristan was someone who was always happy, always in a good mood and he could very quickly cheer up those around him. His positive attitude was certainly contagious.

Prior to his service in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, Sergeant Wade served in Iraq. During those deployments he earned the Army Commendation Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Iraqi Army Good Conduct Medal and the Combat Action Badge. On April 6, 2013, Sergeant Wade's family was presented the Bronze Star and Purple Heart in honor of the supreme sacrifice he made for his fellow Americans and the United States.

Sergeant Wade is survived and mourned by his wife, Alisha Morales of Las Cruces, NM, his mother Tisa Wade and father Daniel Wade, Jr., both of Indianapolis, and his daughter Skylynn